"POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR MOBILE TELECOMMUNICATION ACCESS INFRASTRUCTURE"

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Abstract

This study focuses on the issues of policy and procedures related to Cellular Tower and Antenna structures and their construction in Sri Lanka. All varieties of towers, masts and poles playa major role in the telecommunication industry in general and in cellular mobile sector in particular. Presently there are lots of roof-top and self support tower installations happening in Sri Lanka due to massive expansions of 2G and 3G mobile telecommunication sector. In the Telecommunication Act of Sri Lanka, there is neither adequate provision nor concrete policy for tower and antenna structure construction. This has caused all stakeholders to suffer and face numerous problems in the process of telecommunication infrastructure construction.

The purpose of this research is to provide procedural guidelines and recommendations (Based on research analysis) for respective authorities to function smoothly. The broader objectives of the research are: to improve tower sitting consultation process and identify the most appropriate time frames for the processes of approving and resolving specific tower placements, to develop the plan to promote tower sharing in Sri Lanka, to encourage the operators to build suitable cellular tower installations ensuring public safety and rearranging the existing cellular tower infrastructure and addressing tower related issues (Aesthetic, Lightening, RF issues, etc.) and to Determining the most ,useful and helpful information and the best means of providing it to concerned members of the public.

The development of this dissertation was mainly based on the information gathered through various groups such as General Public, Operators (Service providers), Telecommunications Regulatory Commission including other Government Authorities and other international best practices adopted by various regulatory authorities. A qualitative method known as content analysis was used to analyze the text provided in response to the open-ended questions. The empirical research comprised three strands: an online public consultation through web site and e-mails,

a questionnaire survey for operators and regulator including other stakeholders, who involved in tower approval process.

Following noteworthy findings were observed from the analysis:

a) The industry needs an integrated policy for tower and antenna structure building process.
b) Tower approval process consumes extraordinary long time due to too many stakeholder involvement (It delays the operator network rollouts) and needs improvement.
c) General public awareness is very important in getting their concurrence for tower installations. The lack of information to them as observed today leads to enormous protests to installations owing to their concerns about common safety, aesthetic beauty and environmental impact.

Hence the Government should urge industry and academic institutions to launch more research projects in this area. TRCSL needs to invest more funds in parallel to moderate all activities related to the discipline.